

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 177

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Reverend John Wilkins.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Reverend John Wilkins, a native Memphian who served God through his spiritual music; and

WHEREAS, an icon of gospel blues, Reverend Wilkins "loved God and his family and his congregation whether in church or on tour, and most of all he loved playing music with his daughters to the world"; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wilkins hailed from a musical family; his father, Robert Wilkins, was an important singer and guitarist in the Memphis blues scene of the 1920s; and

WHEREAS, by the time John Wilkins was born in the early 1940s, the elder Wilkins had left secular music behind to focus on gospel and ministry; his early records would later be rediscovered, as would Robert Wilkins himself, who became a beloved figure during the blues revival of the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, John Wilkins followed his father into music, working as a sideman for the "Mother of Beale Street," Ma Rainey II, and soul singer O.V. Wright; he played guitar on Mr. Wright's classic 1965 single "You're Gonna Make Me Cry"; and

WHEREAS, like his father, John Wilkins eventually focused on spiritual music and performed with the M&N Gospel Singers; in the mid-1980s, he answered God's call to the ministry and became the preacher at Hunter's Chapel in Como, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, after thirty years of tending the flock at Hunter's Chapel, Reverend Wilkins recorded and released a belated solo album, *You Can't Hurry God* in 2015, when he was more than seventy years of age; and

WHEREAS, the album was critically acclaimed, and Reverend Wilkins toured all over the world in support of the project; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 2020, Reverend Wilkins released his second solo album, *Trouble*, which was recorded at the famed Royal Studios in South Memphis, the historic home of Hi Records and just a short distance from where he grew up; and

WHEREAS, Reverend John Wilkins is survived by his loving daughters, Tangela Longstreet, Joyce Jones, and Tawana Cunningham; and

WHEREAS, Reverend John Wilkins praised God through his music while bringing the blues home to the people, and the message of his music will continue to resonate around the world; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of gospel-blues legend Reverend John Wilkins, reflecting fondly upon his many contributions to God and humanity as a musician and a minister, and extend to his family, friends, and fans our sympathy and condolences.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.